



USAID
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CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

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Monthly Newsletter – August

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Regional

Vital Lessons for 150,000 Central Asia's Youth

In Central Asia, most new cases of HIV are the result of young people injecting drugs. To counteract that risk, the USAID-funded Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) and CAPACITY programs operate a network of nine Youth Power Centers dotting the main drug trafficking routes running through Central Asia. These centers empower young people to make healthy choices to prevent HIV transfer and avoid risky behavior. More than 150,000 youth have been reached through this initiative. A recent survey carried out in these sites showed significant improvements in youth knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to drug use, sexual behavior, and HIV/AIDS. This segment of CAPACITY and DDRP programs is implemented by Population Services International.

Region's Energy Specialists Learn about the U.S. Energy Markets

In July, USAID's Regional Energy Markets Assistance Program (REMAP) organized a trip for ministry officials, utility specialists, and regulatory officials from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to examine how the wholesale electricity markets are operating in the United States. Four participants visited PJM Interconnection - the independent operator of the largest wholesale electricity market in the U.S., power sector entities that participate in the power market operated by PJM, and regulatory authorities responsible for assuring fair, efficient, and reliable operation of competitive power markets. Region's ministry officials and utility specialists met with their U.S counterparts, electricity traders, transmission owners, load serving entities, and regulatory authorities. Participants found the tour very useful for their understanding how developed competitive power markets work. REMAP also plans a regional workshop, at which information from the study tour will be used to draft a conceptual model of a regional electricity market.



Study tour participants during one of their visits.
Photo: REMAP

Tajik and Turkmen Specialists Strengthen Surveillance and Response to Avian Influenza

At the beginning of August, USAID's Avian Influenza (AI) preparedness project, implemented by Winrock International, started a series of trainings on Highly Pathogenic H5N1 Avian Influenza (AI) surveillance, control, and monitoring management in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The trainings were attended by leading laboratory and veterinary specialists, as well as health professionals from the ministries of health. These trainings support improved planning, preparedness, communications, early-warning surveillance, disease detection, and outbreak response. The USAID project aims to equip and train animal health professionals and laboratory workers to identify H5N1 AI in animals and halt its development into an epidemic. In Turkmenistan, the project will also assist with preparing and printing posters and pamphlets for distribution throughout the country.



USAID-supported trainings increase preparedness of veterinarian specialists to respond to outbreaks. Photo: USAID



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USAID Supports Education on Drug Demand Reduction in the Region's Penitentiary Systems

More than 50% of prisoners in 10 correctional institutions in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have received information and counseling from the USAID-funded Drug Demand Reduction Program (DDRP). The program has also trained from 70-100% percent of the target facility staff on HIV/AIDS and drug prevention issues. DDRP's training courses for correctional institutions are endorsed by the Ministries of Justice of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and are included in the short-term penal system educational curriculum. The program is implemented in part by the AIDS Foundation East West.

To ensure that work continues after the program ends, DDRP supports the Working Groups on Health Promotion in Prisons in the three countries. These groups include officials from the respective Ministries of Justice and Interior, National AIDS Centers as well as representatives of other governmental, non-governmental and international organizations. The groups serve as a platform to discuss collaboration and implementation strategies to sustain drug demand reduction and health promotion education in prison settings.



A meeting of the Working Group on Health Promotion in Penal System in Uzbekistan. Photo: AFEW/DDRP

Kazakhstan

Health Specialists Study Infection Control and Blood Safety on a U.S. Study Tour

Ten specialists from health facilities in Southern Kazakhstan Oblast and the Ministry of Health participated in an "Infection Control and Blood Safety" study tour in the U.S. from August 1-21, 2007. The tour was organized by the USAID Community Connections program in support of the Government of Kazakhstan's efforts to improve infection control procedures in Southern Kazakhstan following the 2006 HIV outbreak in Shymkent. During their three weeks in the US, program participants observed blood transfusion processes in medical settings and discussed various systems for promoting infection control management with their American counterparts. Kazakhstan specialists learned how government and non-profit organization organizations deal with HIV/AIDS,

tuberculosis, and blood transfusions, as well as how policies and regulations facilitate infection control. Technical aspects of the tour were complemented by home stays in American communities and a range of cultural events. Kazakhstan medical professionals plan to use the new knowledge to improve guidelines and procedures in their professional areas of responsibility. USAID and the U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and control are planning to engage tour participants in a follow-up conference on blood safety and infection control in Shymkent later this year.



Ten Kazakhstani medical specialists upon return from their study tour, with USAID and Community Connections staff. Photo: USAID

Tajikistan

Over 90 Percent of Tajikistan's Population is Covered by a Tuberculosis Treatment Program Introduced by USAID

This summer, the Government of Tajikistan opened the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short-course) program in new



Thousands of Tajiks, like this man, receive TB DOTS treatment from USAID-supported health facilities. Photo: USAID

This theater performance was part of a broader campaign to increase TB awareness in Tajikistan. Photo: USAID



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communities, thus expanding it to the total of 51 out of 66 rayons (districts) of Tajikistan. The DOTS strategy, recommended for treatment of tuberculosis (TB) by the World Health Organization, was introduced in Tajikistan by the USAID TB control program in 1998. USAID supports DOTS implementation in four rayons (districts), covering over 1.7 million, or 25%, of the country's population. The USAID TB control program through its partner organizations provides medications, training for health practitioners, monitoring, improving quality assurance systems and public education, and equipment for better TB detection and treatment in the country.

Public Communications Campaigns Increase Tuberculosis (TB) Awareness in Tajikistan

Nearly 14,000 Tajikistanis this summer received information about tuberculosis from the USAID TB control program, implemented by Project HOPE. The project organized six public awareness campaigns in Dushanbe, Rudaki, Kulyab, and Vose. The campaigns distributed over 6,000 leaflets about TB and staged 10 theater performances and 12 puppet shows. As a result, over 400 persons with symptoms of the disease volunteered for medical exams in the target areas, and TB was diagnosed in more than 10% of those cases. Among the five Central Asian Republics, Tajikistan has the highest TB incidence rate.

Health Education for Communities in Rasht District

More than 1,200 people from different communities learned the importance of breastfeeding and nutrition at events held by the Development Assistance program, implemented by Mercy Corps, in Rasht District of Tajikistan in August. Local government representatives, health authorities, community members, religious leaders, members of local and international NGOs came to participate and to observe the events. Participants learned about the preparation of supplemental meals for children over 6 months old, breastfeeding, nutrition for lactating women. Many of the events were opened by a community religious representative who tied health education with the religious messages.



Women compete on quality and speed of placing dolls in traditional cradles. Photo: Mercy Corps

Turkmenistan

USAID Will Help Implement the National Program on HIV/AIDS in Turkmenistan

On August 2, 2007 representatives of the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan, public and international organizations discussed cooperation in implementing the National Program on HIV/AIDS Prevention. The meeting was organized with technical support from the USAID-funded CAPACITY project. Participants discussed CAPACITY's draft work plan which was developed jointly with partners working in the area of HIV prevention. This plan maps out activities in increasing public awareness of HIV/AIDS, according to a Memorandum of Understanding on USAID's cooperation with the Government of Turkmenistan in this area, signed earlier this year. The project will collaborate with the Ministry of Health, the National AIDS Prevention Center, youth and women's unions, and international organizations in its activities.



The meeting discussed CAPACITY's plans to increase public awareness and education on HIV/AIDS. Photo: CAPACITY

Uzbekistan

Uzbek Nurses Receive Materials to Improve Tuberculosis (TB) Education



Equipped with the new brochures, nurses will be able to better educate communities about TB. Photo: ZdravPlus



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The USAID TB control program, implemented by Project HOPE, together with the Republican Institute of Health distributed 10,000 brochures “Think about TB” in Uzbek and Russian languages among patronage Uzbekistan’s nurses. These brochures will help nurses educate their communities on TB issues. The program also prepared and distributed an electronic package of educational materials and the latest information about TB. As in all Central Asia, TB is a widespread disease in Uzbekistan. USAID has been engaged in its control and prevention since 1998.

USAID Supports Economic Policy Activities in Uzbekistan

Thirty leading researchers from Uzbekistan’s leading think tanks and universities recently attended a USAID-sponsored workshop “Preparation of Effective Analytical Documents in the Area of Government Policy”. The six-day workshop was co-organized by the USAID Economic Policy Reform Project, implemented by BearingPoint, and the Center for Economic Research. Participants learned about internationally used standards for analytical papers on policy formulation and implementation.

Fifty-five experts-analysts, high level government officials from the President Office, the Cabinet of Ministers, ministries, and agencies, representatives of mass media, academic circles, and NGOs attended another USAID-sponsored lecture on July 30. The lecture, “Transformation: Economics, Government, Society,” was hosted by the USAID Economic Policy Reform Project with the Center for Economic Research. The event aimed to build capacity of government officials and practicing experts-analysts through discussion with leading international economists.



Government officials and local experts learned about international practices during the USAID-sponsored seminars. Photo: BearingPoint